

excavations

By JILL CLEAVE

The announcement on Tuesday that Newmont Waihi Gold wants to mine directly below 30 homes in Waihi has been met with mostly positive reactions from people living above the proposed site.

The mining company's two-part Golden Link project would involve further underground mining in the existing Martha Mine pit and extending the Trio and Favona operations into new ground in Waihi east, the latter to be known as the Correnso underground project.

The \$1b proposal could extend mining under the town until 2020.

Home owner Norm Collison, 85, and his partner Mavis Basson, 76, live in one of around 30 houses which, if consents were granted, would be some 130 to 350 metres directly above the mine.

Ms Basson said she had never lived above a mine before so did not know how it would work.

"But Newmont have been good so far telling us what was happening, I don't think it will make much difference to us," she said.

She said they had heard blasting at the mine but their home shook more when logging trucks went past.

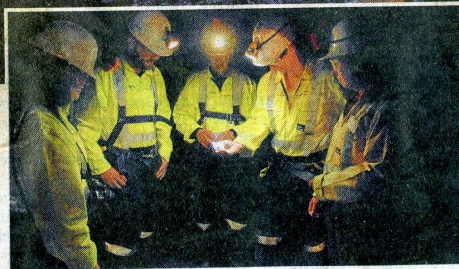
Mr Collison said he thought it was a good thing for the town.

"The thing that worries me is if mining continues for another six years I might not get to see Martha filled in as a lake," he said.

If resource consents were granted, access tunnels would come from the Trio and Favona sites and run 350m underground, parallel to roads above ground.

Murray and Brenda Kurukaanga, who live near Waihi East School, said it would be interesting to see what the company came up with.

Mr Kurukaanga said he was not worried about the access tunnels



OPTIMISTIC: Waihi couple Norm Collison and Mavis Basson aren't too concerned that they might soon be living above an underground mine. Photo: WAIKATO TIMES

NEXT PHASE: Newmont Waihi Gold has announced plans to mine \$1 billion worth of gold and silver which could extend operations in Waihi until 2020. Photo: SUPPLIED

being built below them. "I used to drive trucks down into Favona when they were building the tunnels and I never felt any fear of collapse. They build things to last these days," he said.

Newmont Waihi Gold general manager Glen Grindlay said his company had removed the risk of subsidence, as happened in 2001 when the Royal Mine collapsed, by backfilling any mines with waste rock as it went.

"At present for every truckload

of ore that comes out of Favona and Trio a truckload of waste rock is sent back down," he said.

The company intended to speak to every resident in the proposed area personally to answer any questions and explain what was happening, Mr Grindlay said.

Another affected resident, who did not wish to be named, said she had already been visited by company representatives.

She said she had been fearful for the environment and worried

about the dust and contamination of water.

"It was very informative and good they came to see us personally. They have explained to me about the second water table they will be drawing off and that it does not affect the one used for town water," she said.

She was concerned that natural resources be preserved for future generations.

"I feel better about it and will be attending the council meeting at

the rugby club [tonight] to find out more," she said.

The company has set up a shop in Seddon St which people can visit to get information about the proposed new operations. The company has also set up a vibration scenario so people can experience just how much vibration there will be from blasting.

The Martha Mine extensions fall within Newmont Waihi Gold's current mining licence boundary but the company needs to lodge an application to vary the conditions in order to continue.

The Correnso underground project is an entirely new entity and requires full resource consent.